Tales of power

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ABSTRACT

In the form of an interview between two colleagues, this paper explores fifty years of power theorizing by Stewart Clegg, from his early doctoral days to the present day. The origins of his approach to power in a combination of structuralism, Wittgenstein and ethnomethodology are explored. The background to his early work, whose empirics were based on the analysis of conversational materials, are outlined, as well as how it became a publication. The rationale and context of subsequent significant contributions to the power debate, notably *Frameworks of Power* (1989), are engaged. Elsewhere, the power debate had moved from Lukes' three dimensions of power to four dimensions, the provenance of which is critically evaluated. In order to exemplify the practical implications of these theoretical reflections, the conversation goes on to address some current issues associated with the corona virus pandemic and the relations between democracy and elites.

Keywords: power, social theory, organization theory, democracy and Business Schools.

MB: Stewart, you have been writing and thinking about power for the last half century: your studies on the subject have perhaps made you the world's foremost expert on organizational power. So how has your understanding of power relationships, and power in society and organizations evolved throughout these years?

SC: Well, It is very nice of you to be so flattering but I think there are any number of people who can claim that honour. My friend Mark Haugaard's been working in the space for a long time and

made very important contributions, Steven Lukes also, of course, as well as others. It's true, I have been working on it for almost a half century. I started my PhD in 1971 and I registered to do a PhD in power and organisations. My supervisor, who was David Hickson, had in mind that I do something like an empirical extension and replication of research using the strategic contingencies theory which he developed with Bob Hinings and others, in Alberta (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck & Pennings, 1971).

I did start with a replication of sorts, even if I knew that replication would have been insufficient as a PhD. The Alberta empirical work was done on a Canadian brewery. Under David's advice, I went to a brewery in Halifax, Webster's Brewery. I asked the senior managers the questions that constituted the questionnaire. About a week later I realised why they had seemed a bit nervous and why they had actually allowed me to come and interview them. It was reported in the press that they were being taken over by a much larger brewer; they probably thought that I had knowledge of this, so they let me in. What the strategic contingencies theory provided didn't begin to explore the aspect of the phenomena of power in organizations. The set of abstract categories with which I was framing my respondents clearly weren't their categories. I felt that it would have been much better to work with an interpretive understanding of the respondents' understandings. Of course, that is a retrospective account.

A pivotal event happened subsequently: my supervisor asked me to write an essay on structuralism. I went away and read a number of papers. I read a book called *Structuralism: A Reader*, edited by Michael Lane (1970). There was quite a lot of anthropology in the volume. In particular, the most significant for me was by the French anthropologist Maurice Godelier. It was a paper comparing Lévi-Strauss and Marx, a structuralist reading of Lévi-Strauss and then using it for a reading of Marx's (1976) *Capital*. I became fascinated by this notion of there being a surface and a deep structure. The notion of deep structure made sense to me in terms of underlying rules that the analyst could formulate. In my final undergraduate year, I read Peter Winch's (1958) *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. Winch was clearly writing under the influence of

Wittgenstein (1967) so I decided to go to the source, Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy, where I also found the structuralist distinction between surface structure and deep structure. In part I went there as a result of reading Winch but also Garfinkel (1967); at the same time, I was reading phenomenology. One of my tutors at Aston, Colin Fletcher, had advised me that I should read Schutz (1967) after reading Garfinkel, which I really liked, so I did.

Phenomenology continued to be of interest even as I was reading Wittgenstein. In 1972 Paul Filmer from the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths College published a book, together with some other people, one of whom was familiar to me, David Silverman, because I had read his book on *The Theory of Organizations* (1970). The book was called *New Directions in Sociology* (Filmer, Phillipson, Silverman and Walsh, 1972). Through Paul Filmer, I was invited to come down to Goldsmiths and join an informal seminar that they were running there. I had bought a small cassette player and knew there was something called Conversation Analysis (CA) even though I was at this stage not familiar with its workings. I thought that this device might be useful. The idea that you could do things with talk, which I had already begun to explore in ordinary language philosophy, was fascinating. I took the tape recorder with me after going to the first seminar, in part because I found the seminars entirely baffling. It was a group of people talking about Parmenides and pre-Socratic philosophers, of whom I had no understanding. The discussions kept referring to the grounds, the auspices, of these philosophers' theorizing. I mostly sat mute in the seminars, feeling out of my depth. I would listen to these tapes as I drove home to Yorkshire from London.

I gained some insight into how they came to be talking about these things. Of the figures that had been very influential for this group of scholars at Goldsmiths, one was Alan Blum and the other was Peter McHugh. I had read their chapters in a book called *Understanding Everyday Life*, edited by Jack Douglas (1971) on 'Positivism' (McHugh, 1971) and 'Theorizing' (Blum, 1971). They were the avant-garde of ethnomethodology, marginal to the emerging Conversation Analysis empirical mainstream. While visiting at Goldsmiths, Alan Blum had started work on a book that

became *Socrates, the Original and its Images* (1978); hence, the seminars from which I was gaining little, apart from a growing friendship with David Silverman.

Inspired by the papers on positivism and theorizing in the Douglas (1970) book, I was excited to read a joint paper by Blum and McHugh (1971) on the social ascription of motives. After reading that I went back and read C Wright Mills (1940) on 'Situated Action and Vocabularies of Motives'. These papers also began to chime with my emergent thinking. I began to try and integrate work on motives by Schutz (1967) along with the material that I had more recently read, to think about the social construction of motives as a form of power, inspired by these sources and by an interest in rules, which grew out of attending a Deviancy Conference, I started to work on power. Arthur McCullough and Ad Teulings, colleagues at Bradford, introduced me to Bachrach and Baratz and their critique of the community power debate (1962; 1963; 1970) to add to Dahl (1957) and other more behavioural theorists who wrote about causal power. I was trying to come to terms with that literature. I didn't appreciate the positivism of its framing. Despite having been at Aston, I never had been a positivist.

Meanwhile my supervisor had told me that if I was going to gain a PhD under his supervision I had to get out of the library and do some empirical work. He asked me, didn't I know anything about any organizations or have contacts in them? Frankly, I didn't. I was still thinking about power in terms of the social construction of phenomena and was thinking of the issues/non-issues debate sparked by Bachrach and Baratz's work. My initial idea was to try and get access to a newsroom so I could study how news got to be socially constructed but this proved impossible. There were not a lot of newsrooms and the established academics researching them didn't want a random PhD student around.

I had worked as a labourer on a building site prior to coming to Bradford in the gap between undergraduate and graduate study. Feeling desperate, I made contact with the firm that had employed me in those days that introduced me to another site in the same Northern Town (Huddersfield), proximate to where I had grown up. I told the firm that I was interested in how

management was actually done in practice, which was in fact correct, although my topic, as registered, was Power and Organizations. I was a little economical with that truth, as I thought it might scare them.

I spent several months on the site mostly in the project office with the tape recorder which I would trigger when talk started. Initially I knew that there was this stream of ethnomethodological work by Harvey Sacks (1972). I started to read the Sacks and other related CA people and realised CA wasn't appropriate. In interaction between the project manager and others on the site who interrupted, who spoke the most, who spoke over the other was actually epiphenomenal as an adjunct of positions in authority relations. I was panicking; what I had thought would be a fall-back strategy looked to be failing. By this time, I had recorded months of conversational data on the site, which I laboriously transcribed in the evenings so I could reuse the cassette tapes again the next day. Desperately seeking what to do with the data I was thinking about its grounding, referencing back to the Goldsmiths seminars that overlapped the field work.

Ethnomethodology regards us all as theorists, doing everyday theorizing, all the time. Maybe if I treated what people said as the surface structure, after Wittgenstein, then perhaps I could try to analytically formulate the underlying rules that make it possible for them to say those things, the grounds, the underlying rules, of their discourse. Additionally, I was intrigued by Wittgenstein's elliptical references to form of life, which I interpreted as being about the really deep structural assumptions that made implicit rules coherent, a mode of rationality.

Bachrach and Baratz came into the analysis with regard to the way that issues and non-issues were constituted in the process of the flow of events. The issue that really unlocked the key for me, was an issue about what kind of clay was 'normal'. Discussions about clay uncovered some underlying deep structure. It occurs to me now, that it was ironical that the insight about the empirical application of the idea of deep structure related, literally, to digging beneath the surface. The interaction sequence around what I termed 'normal clay' made sense in terms of the indexicality of contractual documents that didn't cover every eventuality and weren't entirely clear. The project

manager was exploiting the indexicality of the contractual documents to squeeze more profit from the project. These documents could be interpreted opportunistically to constitute issues in certain sorts of ways that the client representative resisted. My data set became a discourse in which everyday actors were theorizing the possibilities and opportunities of their organizing and working, using lay theories. I wish that I had called it 'discourse analysis' but that term did not occur to me at the time, although in retrospect, that was what it was.

I came up with a scheme with three structural levels: the surface structure, what the members of the project said in the everyday processes of work. Underlying this was what I thought of as a deep structure, the ways in which implicit rules formed a coherent mode of rationality underlying speech, acting from grounds and auspices that analysis established as inherently and contextually coherent. On an analogy with grammar, they did not formulate the rules in use while speaking. There was a third level, deeper structure, which, after Wittgenstein (1968), I termed form of life. Each level corresponded respectively, to power, rule and domination. The form of life revolved around profit as the icon of capitalism, which proved pivotal in the data analysis as I realised the centrality of the contract and its indexicality to practices on site.

MB: Even if it does not explicitly discusses the issue of power, also Edgar Schein's model, describing Organizational Culture as made of visible symbolic artefacts expressing tacit values and deeply embedded basic assumption (Schein 1985 [2004]) bears some resemblance with the 'multi-layered' conceptualization of power that you were developing at that time.

SC: I didn't know Schein's model of culture then and only really became familiar with it later (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis, 2005/2019). Writing the chapter on Managing Culture in that book, entailed becoming familiar with Schein's work. I hadn't thought of that before but, yes, you're right, it's a similar kind of thing.

Going back to my story, I wasn't entirely confident in my supervisors' reaction to what I had been doing, increasingly remotely, so I did something I probably should have done previously, which

was to look up the regulations for award of a PhD: work submitted should be of publishable quality. Hence, I thought if I could secure a contract to publish the thesis with a reputable publisher prior to submission I fulfilled that remit. I was advised to approach a literary agent to represent me in finding a publisher. These were mostly in London; I was mostly in Yorkshire. I sent a proposal to A D Peters & Co, Literary Agents, in London. They approached Professor John Rex, the Editor for the Routledge & Kegan Paul International Library of Sociology, who to my delight, accepted it for publication. I submitted my PhD in June or July of 1974 and was awarded the PhD in the autumn, after examination by David Silverman, to whom I owe the utmost appreciation. I doubt that what I had done would have made much sense to most contributors to the organization theory of the day. I dreaded being examined by most of them. That David had written *The Theory of Organizations* legitimated him as an examiner and I went into the *Viva voce* with a contract for publication of the PhD I was being examined on, which made the whole affair a relaxed and positive experience.

Shortly thereafter, Steven Lukes' book on *Power: A Radical View* (1974) was published. I was alarmed when I looked at this book, so concise and clear, thinking no one will be interested in my book. I would have preferred it if I did not have such a competitor in the market at much the same time.

On the strength of the publication forthcoming and the PhD, I was appointed to a lectureship at Trent Polytechnic. I taught 16 hours a week across five subjects, for none of which the previous three years PhD work had prepared me. I survived by often cramming the evening before a lecture. After six months I was fortunate to leave and take up an EGOS (European Group for Organization Studies) post-doctoral scholarship, for which David Hickson, my supervisor and institution builder of EGOS, sponsored me. I was very grateful. My task was to research European organizational approaches to power – which I interpreted as carte blanche to develop, in part, a better understanding of Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches to scholarship as well as European social theory in general.

In 1976, fearing unemployment at the end of the post-doctoral, by chance I received a telegram offering me a job in Australia. I emigrated to Australia with my wife and our Old English Sheepdog to work at Griffith University, Brisbane, in the School of Humanities. In Queensland there was no business school at that time and the experience of working in an inter-disciplinary school, with anthropologists, historians, comparative literature scholars, media studies people, semioticians and many other forms of scholarship new to me, led me further away from business school mainstream concerns.

At the time, Giddens' books were always an event to anticipate. Hence when *New Rules of Sociological Method* (Giddens, 1976), arrived in my mailbox, I read it with great interest. It was a very sharp departure from his earlier work and in the middle of the book was a table similar to my schema of power, rule and domination. Giddens had clearly been reading phenomenology and ethnomethodology, as I had, which I think Lukes had not. Nonetheless, we all ended up with a tripartite more or less structural analysis of power. Much as Lukes and I, he had been reading some similar material and drawn similar conclusions.

I also continued working on power, completing the EGOS project with a book on *The Theory of Power and Organization* (Clegg, 1979). I sought to take account of Lukes' (1974) three dimensions of power. In between, a volume edited with David Dunkerley, was published as *Critical Issues in Organizations* (Clegg & Dunkerley, 1977), seeking to extend the boundaries of existing scholarship in the area. *The Theory of Power and Organization* was written in haste, in part as a commitment to the EGOS post-doctorate and it also fulfilled the function of being lecture material. The book incorporated elements of debates around Gramscian and Marxist approaches. Prior to reading Lukes' (1974) book, I had not been familiar with Gramsci. *The Theory of Power and Organization* did not contribute to conventional debates in organization theory. I didn't really feel a sense of belonging to that community of practice; how could I? It was practically absent where I worked and lived. Back in the 1970s there were very few organizations' scholars anywhere other than the Australian Graduate School of Management Studies in Sydney, a thousand kilometres away from

Brisbane. Knowing key people there, it was apparent my ideas were not welcome. *The Theory of Power and Organization* in many ways was the precursor of a book I wrote with David Dunkerley, *Organization, Class and Control* (1980), which did have some influence on the field. Without appreciating that this was the case, *Organization. Class and Control* took a genealogical approach to analysis, using the history of the field as data. During this time, I ended up co-editing the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* with Queensland University Sociology Professor John Western. I also worked with a political economist, Geoff Dow and a political and industrial sociologist, Paul Boreham on books on class structure. We published the *State, Class and the Recession* (1983) and *Class, Politics and the Economy* (1986). For many years I didn't do any conventional empirical work, except some survey-based work with John Western and other colleagues on a project on the class structure of Australia, adapting Erik Olin Wight's class analysis model (see Wright, 1985), modifying and adapting that in various ways.

I left Griffith University in 1984 to take up the Chair of Sociology at the University of New England (UNE). At UNE I was asked to take a course on power and conflict. At Griffith a number of colleagues were deeply involved with scholars such as Derrida, Lacan and for me, most significantly, Foucault. I had read Foucault's *The archaeology of knowledge* in the early 1970s and found it difficult. Consequently, I hadn't read Foucault much but now I was in a very conventional sociology department with very conventional sociologists and to teach power, I needed to come to terms with Foucault as an important part of the topic and could not rely on others doing it elsewhere. A very condensed course on the sociology of the state grounded the last chapter of *Frameworks of Power*.

I started my second attempt at reading Foucault with *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Doing that produced a short paper which ended up being published as 'Radical Revisions' (Clegg, 1989) in *Organization Studies*. I initially gave this paper to a workshop of EGOS luminaries in 1986 or 87 and it went down like a lead balloon. I was completely ignored; nobody addressed any of the issues or questions raised. These people didn't seem at all interested in my ideas, something that I had

become used to. They hadn't a clue who Foucault was and seemed to regard my approach as not worth discussing, at least as I interpreted the lack of engagement; nonetheless, snubbing encouraged me to develop the ideas further, refining and revising the paper persistently. Foucault on power was entirely disconnected from the debates about power that framed the predominantly American contemporary literature.

I now felt inspired to go back to power again because I had a new angle on things, I wasn't just reproducing previous work. I saw problems with the structuralist inspired approach of my earlier work and in Lukes' and Giddens' work. I sent a proposal for a volume in the *Key Ideas* series that Tavistock published, which was rejected. My friend David Silverman had told me that he thought Steven Brooks, at that stage the editor for the Sociology series for Sage, was a good publisher. I talked to Steven at a conference and as publishers' do, he asked me 'what are you working on?' I sent him the proposal that became *Frameworks of Power* (1989).

I started to work on that book, inspired with more confidence and knowledge than I had on the last occasion I had written about power in 1979. I began to think historically about how ideas emerge, something I had tried out in the earlier work on *Organization, Class and Control*, thinking about the grounds of theorizing again. I read Hobbes (1651/1914) and Machiavelli (1532/1958). Reading *Leviathan*, I saw that, many hundreds of years previously, almost all of the ideas underlying the behavioural models seemed to be underscored there. Power is cause, was effectively Hobbes' message. I was introduced to Machiavelli initially by reading Sheldon S. Wolin's (1960) remarkable *Politics and Vision*. I thought of Machiavelli, hidden in the cloisters, observing everything that was going on in courtly life, plotting the strategies and the scheming. I could see how the Machiavellian approach to power had influenced Gramsci. Once I read Machiavelli, I felt I discerned foundations of an alternative way of thinking about power, much closer to Foucault. Machiavelli provided grounds for thinking about another conception of power. A tension I discerned between Machiavelli and Hobbes allowed me to not only make more sense of Foucault but also the development of debates about power.

For the *Frameworks* project I re-read all the materials that I had ever worked and found myself becoming more sympathetic to Dahl's position than I had been, because I could see it was at least trying to nail things down with empirical protocols. Looking at the community power debate, the reputational methodology was not as rigorous as Dahl. Dahl was at least trying to put some parameters around power with his notions of scope, domain and so on. I became more sympathetic to Dahl.

In 1979 I had read Bhaskar's (1975) *A Realist Theory of Science,* which made a big impression on me. I had published a paper, rarely cited, on 'Phenomenology and Formal Organizations: A Realist Critique' (Clegg, 1983), influenced by Bhaskar. I read Rom Harré and Harry Madden's (1975) *Causal Powers* and Harre's (1985) *Varieties of Realism.* The realist view of science chimed with my notion that we're all practical ethnomethodologists, trying to configure scenes and stable routines, to create the kinds of effects that we want, which became instrumental in thinking about what I subsequently termed episodic power.

I began reading Actor Network theory, especially Callon (1986), Callon and Latour (1981) and Callon and Law (1982). I loved the idea of the scallops of St Brieuc Bay, these mute little creatures, being major actants recalcitrant to the agency of fisherman and the scientists. The key concept that I took out of Callon was this notion of 'obligatory passage points'. I found a very similar idea in Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.* They talked about necessary nodal points but there's not a hair's breadth of difference between a necessary nodal point and an obligatory passage point. I had all the raw materials, I just had to put it together. I had to come up with a recipe.

Previously everything had been written with a tub full of 2B pencils on one hand, a pencil sharpener and an empty tub on the other hand. That changed. On 1988 I was on study leave at the University of Otago, in the deep south of New Zealand, in Dunedin, where they had a computer laboratory, with a number of Macintosh machines and I slowly stopped pencilling in favour of composing on the computer where I discovered MacDraw. The MacDraw program allowed one to draw boxes

and put arrows between them. When I was trying to sketch out where my thinking was, I used this to try to represent my emerging ideas visually, the origin of the 'Circuits of Power' diagram.

Once I produced the diagram, then I made the complete transition from the earlier structuralist way of thinking about power, to a much more process flow-based view of power. I didn't see power as a thing, I didn't see it as structural, I wasn't seeing it as dimensions. I saw it as essentially processes and flows, in which actants could be as vital as actors. Given my interest in actants, I recalled Perry Anderson's (1974) account of how rats and fleas introduced the bubonic plague and transformed feudal relations in 14th century Europe, starting a long, slow transition into capitalist relations of production. Given the prevalence of the HIV/Aids virus as a contemporary exogenous environmental contingency, which could have a transformative processual flow through the interstices of organizations and social relations more generally, I was alert to viruses as actants.

I wouldn't resile from most of what I have to say in *Frameworks of Power* and am sceptical about some more recent debates. Cynthia Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) and Mark Haugaard (2012; 2020a; 2020b) have talked about a fourth dimension of power incorporating Foucault into the dimensions of power framework (Lukes, 1974; 2005). I am antithetical to this view of Foucault, addressing it as 'super-structuralism' in *Power and Organizations* (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips, 2006), a critique also shared with Lukes (2005). I would make an exception for Mark's latest book, which I read in typescript. He links the fourth dimension to specific spaces, making it far less over-deterministic and generalizing, as I understood it.

MB: Maybe the choice of including four rather than three depends on the heuristic (or even rhetorical) purposes for which a conceptual classification of power is employed. In this regards it is useful to compare the typology of power developed by Peter Fleming and André Spicer (2014) with your circuit of power model (Clegg 1989). Fleming and Spicer distinguish between visible and invisible, and between episodic and systemic manifestation of power, producing a typology that includes coercion, manipulation, domination and subjectification This is a crude but very useful mapping device, offering a set of coordinates to organize empirical manifestation of a phenomenon.

For example, I have used it recently to theorize organizational pragmatic paradoxes, linking different forms of oppressive power relations to the emergence of different types of absurd contradictions experienced in organizational life (Berti & Simpson 2019).

By contrast, your circuits of power model, with its emphasis on the flow of power relations across different levels (individual, organizational and systemic), and through obligatory passage points (Clegg 1989) is particularly useful to analyse the dynamics of power, in a process perspective. Your model allows one to account for different actions, performed both by human actors and nonhuman actants, coming together phenomenologically, in an ongoing production of power. In other words, your conceptualization aims to describe how power emerges and is temporarily 'fixed' in societal and organizational relational patterns. Again, this different use of the typology is not connected to the number of dimensions that one chooses to represent.

At any rate it is important not to reify any of these 'faces' of power, assuming that there are objectively separate circuits or dimensions; one must bear in mind that the purpose of a typology is not simply 'descriptive', it must be used to interrelate ideas and investigate causal interactions between different constructs (Cornelissen 2017).

SC: I still feel that the fourth dimension of power is a notion of super-structuralism. Moreover, Lukes' third dimension is deeply problematic because the only way it can be made sense of is to assume a position that grants omnipotent power to a theorist who knows peoples' real interests better than they do themselves. It ascribes the theorist an extraordinarily privileged position of making visible what is invisible to the benighted. In a realm as interpretative and changing as social theory this is not justifiable or democratic. Perhaps if we were talking about the way in which a contagion spreads, and you were talking to somebody who was a virologist or an epidemiologist it would be different. The virus has no interest other than its proclivity to reproduce and mutate.

MB: Well, Stewart, before you said that I was flattering you, now I want to challenge, then to criticize you. I see a limitation, in your celebrated model, which derives from the image you used

(the electronic circuit) to metaphorically describe power, which I find too mechanistic. Interestingly, you have described the device that you had at your disposal to organize your research data: is it possible that that primitive computer tacitly shaped your thinking?

SC: I didn't deliberately produce a model of circuits of power. When I drew the model, it looked similar to circuit models I was familiar with from models represented in the handbooks that went with my audio equipment. It was really my love of music, leading to experience with stereo systems, that was the inspiration.

MB: This could actually be construed as an (ironic) demonstration of the validity of your conceptualization: you were influenced by the presence of 'systemic forms of powers' (the technologies you were using and that you were familiar with) that were inadvertently moulding your ways of writing about power. However, I'd like to consider another aspect here. Metaphors are not just descriptive but are also generative of meaning (Schön 1993), a phenomenon that is enabled by the juxtaposition of two separate domains (Cornelissen 2005): while this creative potential can be harnessed for heuristic purposes, it can also constrain our imagination. My impression is that, on the one hand, the metaphor of circuits was certainly extremely effective for highlighting the role of processes, thus stressing that power is not a tangible entity, a form of currency (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips 2006), but a constant flow of energy, a reconfiguration of relationships. On the other hand, the image of an electronic circuit, appears to constrain the flow of power in specific paths. This is also connected with the notion of obligatory passage point, which might suggest that there are certain 'channels' that are deterministically and materialistically set, constraining relationships.

Your own description of the intellectual journey which led to the development of your original ideas does not suggest that it was constrained by 'obligatory passage points'. Rather, your course appeared to be influenced – at most – by 'probabilistic passage points', that is, the likelihood of certain things happening more than others. In this, serendipity played a huge role. Take for instance your opportunistic use of what David Hickson meant when referring to 'structuralism'. Also,

consider the paradoxical effects of your supervisor's use of 'power over': his injunction ("get out of the library") ended up empowering you, inducing you to do things differently. While your contribution was absolutely pivotal, by offering a 'phenomenological' understanding of power (as a process), my impression is that you were a bit timid back then, constraining this phenomenology into what seems to be a rigid mechanism.

SC: Those were the obligatory passage points if I was to get a PhD under David Hickson's supervision. I was deeply aware that I had to show evidence; the reason for a large data appendix. Unless I could convince a supervisor not necessarily well disposed to my orientation, I knew I was not going gain a PhD and three years would have been totally wasted. So, yes, that was true.

Let me go back to what you just said. I think organisations are absolutely constituted of obligatory passage points. Key are the rules and routines they produce, particularly by HRM departments. You have just recently been promoted in the university so you have to read a set of documents which tell you what the benchmarks are for performance and you have to be able to demonstrate that you have excelled in your accomplishment on these benchmarks in order to meet the hurdle to gain promotion. Well isn't that an obligatory passage point? I mean organization seems to me to be an architectonic device for constructing obligatory passage points which shift with the flow of events.

MB: No doubt about that. I'm not suggesting that material or structural constraints do not exist. Rather, I think that (in most cases) these constraints are not deterministically defining our possible behaviour.

SC: No, I don't think they are either, you misunderstand me. Let's go back to the basics again. In everything I do, there's still an element of ethnomethodology. We're all practical theorists theorizing, trying to make sense of our lives to configure relations in ways which produce the kinds of effects that we want to produce. And that's not deterministic; one of the things that organisations do is to try to make that determinism possible but always in the face of events that they cannot necessarily control.

MB: Definitely. But we should also consider an intrinsic limitation by our humanity, our constant attempt at 'taming' the indeterminacy of reality by deterministically categorizing our experience. This attempt to articulate and give a fixed meaning to reality is doomed to fail because of the irreducible complexity of reality. As Camus poetically expressed it "This world in itself is not reasonable… what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (Camus 1955). This is further compounded by the performative effects of social theories, which sometimes determine the reality that they purportedly attempt to describe (Callon 2007; D'Adderio & Pollock 2014; Marti & Gond 2018). In other words, the moment in which an organisation sets an obligatory passage point, reality will fight back: either because planning fails, something unexpected happens, or because actors' devises workaround strategies.

SC: Of course, that's the point of exogenous environmental contingency. I mean we are living through the COVID-19 virus at the present time, it's the perfect example.

MB: Also going back to your example, you were perfectly aware of the obligatory passage point of heeding the advice of your supervisor. But the existence of ambiguity enabled you to go in a completely different direction, which actually led you to do exactly the opposite of what your supervisor would have wanted you to do. This 'mistake' also enabled another serendipitous encounter; you found a mentor in David Silverman, who became your examiner, ally and friend. Some obligatory passage points do, indeed, exist and we all contribute to their 'maintenance' as we recognise their existence. Yet, because of the irreducible uncertainty of reality, even the consequences of our compliance are indeterminant.

SC: There is a little bit more creativity as well. Being asked to do an essay back in 1972 or whenever it was, on structuralism, I didn't think for one minute that David Hickson was familiar with Maurice Godelier, Claude Levi-Strauss etc. There was a little bit of creative ambiguity exploited. And I agree with your views on realism as I explained previously.

MB: What about emotions? You talked about finding excitement in learning and in reading.

SC: Doing a PhD is a very exciting and deeply emotional time. I just didn't find much of actually existing organization theory on power very interesting back in the early 1970s. The vanguard of organisation theorists publishing on power, was strategic contingencies theory (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck & Pennings, 1971), which my supervisor created, opening a path I didn't find interesting to go down. Creativity blended with serendipity in colleagues' sharing other knowledge. The work of organization theory that I found stirred me most at that time was Silverman's *The Theory of Organizations:* desiccated systems theory was not appealing to me in those days.

MB: Your story shows how by coping and 'working through' different obligatory passage points, you developed some novel ideas which led you to go back to your sources, inspiring you to interpret them differently, which produced new ideas and so forth in an iterative process. Hence, there is a constant flow, in that your 'episodic' actions brought about a transformation of the relationship between the dispositional and the facilitative circuit affecting you. For example, your move to Australia allowed you to enter a different context, a different 'dispositional' system.

SC: The move to Australia was highly consequential. Intellectually, my first degree was a degree in behavioural science which was an interdisciplinary degree with specialism in psychology, sociology or economics. Being in the School of Humanities opened an intellectual breadth of riches previously never encountered. I sampled as much as I could that seemed to be interesting and useful to me. A common interest in Marxism enabled political economists, sociologists and semioticians to talk with each other, the Latin of the left intelligentsia; of course, Latin is a dead language.

MB: This example gives me further ammunition to push your model towards, considering a possibility for its expansion. Another important aspect of power is that between power over, as a form of symptoms of oppression or limitation of individual agency and power to, the capacity to do things in concert (Arendt 1972), expanding individual capacities. In this latter view power becomes empowerment, emancipation. The two things, power over and power to, are not just

simply different but are also somehow interconnected and interdependent: this is actually something that Mark Haaugard has discussed in his work (2012; 2020a; 2020b). I find particularly intriguing the idea that since "on the empirical level structure is not the opposite of agency and freedom" (Haugaard 2012, p. 32) power over, which is normatively associated with oppression, also enables collective achievements. In other words, to achieve collaboration and coordination, individual agency must be constrained. This consideration should not lead to a simplistic Machiavellianism, accepting that the end of producing collective achievement endeavour justifies short term oppression (the typical argument of Stalinism). As you wrote, Machiavelli was indeed recommending to the virtuous not to underestimate power conditions (Cunha, Clegg, & Rego 2013). The question for you is: would it be possible to expand the circuit of power to account for 'power to'?

SC: I'm not sure I'm going to answer this in the way you might want but I'll answer it with some empirical instances. Joyce Rothschild and Allan Whitt did research on collectivist organisations in the late 1970s. Those collectivist organisations that sustained themselves were paradoxical because on the one hand, by empowering people to have the power to collaborate and work with each other, they had first to subordinate to some deeply dominating imperative religious, maybe political, such as feminism or socialism. The paradox is that 'power to', empowerment, a collective endeavour, flourished best in a context of ideological domination.

The key paradox is that if agents have to exercise episodic power, contrary to what the behaviourists thought, this is not demonstrating that they 'have power', it's actually demonstrating quite the contrary. When power doesn't have the authority to configure how things are turning out, it has to intervene by exercising power, which, paradoxically, demonstrates that interventions of power show not so much strength as weakness.

MB: To exemplify that, dictators who resorts to the use of force or military power to enforce their will demonstrate their powerlessness. By contrast, someone who is really in a position of power, doesn't need to use violence or visible oppression.

SC: Absolutely. Let's think about the contemporary stories of the day. If you look at the way in which nations around the world have reacted to the COVID-19 virus, they are essentially showing their weakness before nature, before a phenomenon they cannot control, that is entirely disinterested, which will proceed randomly to replicate. The assumption of draconian powers is not an indication of the *powerfulness* of the state or a government but actually of the relative *powerlessness* of the state and government in the face of the virus' random contingency that. Now having said that, it's clear that in some cases, by intervening early in local circumstances, some states were able to contain and constrain the viral infection to a greater extent. Clearly, the more episodic powers are available to a government or a state, to a regime, the more able it is to do that. The greater difficulty is presented by a situation in which power is more dispersed, pluralistically distributed amongst, as in more classical democracies; in these situations, considerable moral suasion has to accompany powers of intervention. In a city state which is effectively a one party state, such as Singapore, which has not always had friendly neighbours, a collectively inward orientation is not so hard to produce; likewise, in a culturally and ethnic homogenous state such as South Korea, also lacking friendly neighbours, a certain history of compliance is easier to achieve and let's not forget that these states were better prepared to deal with COVID-19 because they had experienced SARS beforehand.

MB: Stewart, I find that your example raises new questions. Wouldn't we be analytically better off if we were able to distinguish two types of power? To start with we have 'physical' power, i.e. connected to materiality, manifesting when we are dealing with non-human forces. This seems different from 'relational' political power, understood as a sociological phenomenon. Our fight, in terms of humanity versus COVID-19, is an example of the first type of power. In this case we are battling a mindless, material adversary, which randomly tries to multiply. In this our relationship with COVID-19 fits the classic definition of an actor having power over us: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957:202-3). However, the situation is quite clear cut, and boils down to our capacity to fight back and find ways of inactivating the virus, its transmission and/or its effects.

If we consider the impact of the pandemic in a sociological sense, the network of relationships is more complex. Lockdown measures that have been imposed, to various degrees, to a large proportion of humanity are de-facto limitation on our freedom, which are intended to protect us. This could be seen as an example of 'power over' aimed at 'power to' outcomes. Yet different normative preferences come into play. Someone – for instance, some elderly but still active persons, could argue that they are not interested in their freedom to live longer if they are not allowed to experience life at its fullest. Alternatively, a young person could resent that to protect (mostly) the lives of old citizens the economy is being crushed, depriving them of employment opportunities, potentially causing them current and future hardship. All these tensions and paradoxes make sociological, political power much more complex.

SC: This is a paradox that Mark Haugaard has pointed out too. He uses the example of parents and children, in that parents constrain the freedoms of a child to explore phenomena in order to preserve their safety. Writers influenced by Judith Butler (1990) look at the way in which children are brought into adulthood in terms of gender relations. In a sense, after Foucault, they see the whole process of socialization, as a form of power shaping identity in terms of available scripts. So, the father who tells his little daughter that she's looking very pretty today, isn't trying to reproduce a patriarchal hierarchy but may inadvertently be producing a set of expectations and dispositions on the parts of the girl in question, such that it is the case. Likewise, when the father says to the son, "oh start acting like a man, grow up". Of course, you are absolutely right. All of these are ways of trying to canalise and constrain the freedoms of the person but are not the freedoms of the person always contextual? It isn't as if there is a *tabula rasa* of options available for us or our freedoms and that, somehow, exogenous forces come and box us in various ways. We're always boxed; we cannot not be boxed; we are always being constrained by the discourses, the language, available to us to use. This is why power is so pervasive, it's around us all the time; its entanglements inscribe us.

MB: To remain in the paradox, total freedom could only be achieved by locking ourselves into a room or becoming hermits on a deserted island; yet deprivation of social contacts is a primary cause of distress for most people. We need to be incorporated into a relational structure, which unavoidably entails power. Hence power is actually essential for humans, because relationships are essential for humans to live and thrive.

SC: Absolutely, I think then the interesting thing becomes, looking at control of the flows through which power moves. We need to look at Bourdieu's (1977) conceptions of power, for instance to look at the ways in which power begets power, to look at the way in which control of financial capital begets flows of intellectual capital, of social capital and so on, to look at the way in which the 1% canalise and channel the life chances and probabilities of the 99%. There is a sense in which, in the trajectory of theorizing that we've been discussing, the old theoretical debate between pluralists and elites has become forgotten. It's a material fact that there are real elites, not the fake elites that you read about, politicians castigating intellectuals and experts. The 400 or so major multinational corporations that strive to orchestrate the vast amount of global economic relations are one major site where the real elites, not the fake ones, are to be found.

MB: Even if I think that global economic relations are a bit too complex to be truly 'orchestrated', certain elites are much better positioned to take advantage of naturally 'emergent' relations. Even without being a conspiracy theorist who believes that COVID-19 must have been designed by someone, it is possible to be persuaded that there will be groups that are much better positioned than most to take advantage of the consequences of this pandemic, whatever they might be.

SC: There are certain social situations, there are spaces, there are places in which elite power is quite definitely concentrated. Sociologically, we need to investigate these. Now it is difficult to do so because the average sociological researcher is usually not very welcome in the citadels of power. Because we're scruffy, we don't speak the same language, we haven't got anything to offer, and we could be dangerous. So, it's a very difficult area in which to begin to do primary research. Business

school researchers have better opportunity than most to do this work but as an organisation theory person, how many ethnographies of board meetings have you read?

MB: I know of one recent attempt to produce an ethnography of power by a colleague of ours at UTS, Rosemary Sainty. She studied practices of governance in relation to corporate sustainability by observing board meetings. This is very important research, because the relationship of power that consolidate the establishment are performed through daily micro-practices, that are not recorded in any official document. Yet, it is exceedingly difficult to conduct this type of research, because of the difficult access to these contexts.

SC: The point is, empirically focused social research can only go where it can only go. That really means that we have to try and get into places that we can't access easily, in other ways, which is where social theory comes in (Clegg & Cuhna, 2019). I had the idea for a book on *Management, Organizations and Contemporary Social Theory*, which I discussed with Miguel, my co-editor, as a way of trying to reconnect organization theory with the broader field of social theory so that a new generation of students would be able to stretch their minds a little bit further than just the latest core journals. I wanted to provide food for thought, a cuisine that might be a little *nouvelle* but also enticing. Social theory can remake the mundane into something much more compelling. Think of Piketty (2014).

MB: I agree, with just one qualification. I think it is important to overcome a binary thinking, assuming the existence of a dualism between design and emergence. Foucault, for instance, advocates the latter position: to him discourse is not designed by any elite but emerges spontaneously. In his view power is a matrix of relations that shapes meaning in a specific time and place, no-one is outside or above this matrix (including the ruling classes). At the opposite end of the spectrum you would find Marxist thinkers, who assume that economic elites are in cahoots in designing and maintaining the ideological and productive structures that underpin society and that to oppose these elites it is necessary to design an alternative model of society. Gramsci (1971) was arguably the first to bridge the two positions, with his discussion on hegemony. Rather than

assuming that any specific agent (the Pope, the Government, the Industrialists etc.) had full agency in 'designing' the capitalist society, he described how an organic collaboration of the elites, was functional in maintaining an ideological and meaning apparatus. When supported through everyday interactions in informal meetings and embedded in formal institutions (such as the School, the State Bureaucracy, the Church etc.), this becomes normalised as a morally appropriate way of thinking and acting for the entire population. This conceptualization fundamentally anticipates the idea of structuration made famous by Giddens (1984). At any rate that's how we can think of elites: not as a club with a well-defined membership, that meets in secret to decide the future of the world but rather a constantly emergent pattern of strategies, ideas, principles that it is created both through formal discussion (such as the Davos meetings) but also by individuals who bump into each other in exclusive events, or in a first class airport lounge.

SC: It's not random, I agree. There are institutional crucibles in which this social reproduction of elites and ideas takes place. The classic case is something like the English public school and elite institutions, such as Oxford, Cambridge etc.

MB: …and also Harvard, Stanford, etcetera

SC: These are already institutional crucibles. And of course, every now and then, talented aspirants and occasional mavericks cross the boundary. They are able to enter because they are particularly talented or gifted or they are very good at impression management, whatever it may be. It's not a sealed zone, it's not an entirely a homogenous zone. The offspring of drug dealers, rock stars and corrupt politicians can end up going to Eton, Harrow or Rodean but they usually become very different people from their parents; that's the point – social capital washing away the stain of a lack of class.

MB: Effectively filtering the rate of exchange with the rest of the society

SC: Sure, but I think the crucial thing is that certain sorts of institutional spaces are characterised by certain modes of rationality. Effectively, to the extent that you don't respect what those modes

of rationality are, one's deviance will be, if not acted upon, be remarked upon; one will learn the rules on those occasions that one breaks them.

MB: There is another interesting phenomenon regarding the relationship between these 'institutional crucibles' and the rest of the society. As you noticed this *inner sanctum* is very difficult to access from the outside. At the same time, from these circles, certain ways of thinking or ways of being are irradiated on the outside. For instance, the same sort of institutional principles that drive elite institutions such as Oxford or Harvard, have been imitated and then adopted, by a great number, if not all, tertiary education institutions. Take for instance the idea, especially widespread in 'leading' Business schools (including ours), that we are selecting the best and brightest, training the leaders of tomorrow. This is at odds with our mission as public universities, whose purpose should be to create better citizens or to expand knowledge for a fairer and more prosperous society rather than being about creating new winners, new decision makers and so forth.

SC: I take a jaundiced view of contemporary university institutions, particularly the Business Schools. It seems to me that discursively, neo-liberalism has effectively permeated them to such an extent that their leadership is somewhat bereft of institutional decency with which to clothe themselves. Their strategies are incoherent. They have, essentially, committed to piling up as many fee-paying international students as possible in order for the income to become catalysts for real estate investment to produce wonderful facilities that will attract more fee-paying students. Of course, after the crisis is over the buildings will stand even though our students may prefer not to come to them but to 'learn online'.

It is important, nonetheless, not to be too totalising in a view of the institution of the Business School. There is a marked difference between the very elite institution and the assuredness that they may have in their elite mission and the desperate searching for rationalization and justification of second tier, let us say. The university world is populated by a very small number of first tier contractors and a great many second and third, and possibly fourth tier contractors, operating under very different premises

and with very different practices. The plurality affords opportunities to do things differently that are rarely exercised effectively, in part, perhaps, due to the institutional legitimation of accreditation agencies, such as the AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business).

MB: Actually, this idea of reproduction and reinforcement of an elite could have paradoxical consequences. Ideally all these 'leaders' are supposed to ensure the success of the organizations they guide by devising and selecting unique strategies. It is by developing distinctive, innovative capabilities that their organizations can beat the competition. Yet, as member of an elite who were forged in the same 'crucibles' and who constantly interact with each other, they are particularly subject to institutional logics, especially under the guise of normative and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). They tend to adopt very similar ways of thinking, deciding, acting, feeling, both because they were socialised in similar ways and because they tend to imitate each other. The consequence is that – by virtue of being an elite – they often fail in their stewardship duties towards their own organizations: they can provide connection and legitimation but not authentic innovation and differentiation. It is as if they were serving another invisible organisation.

SC: Elites are highly permeable, otherwise we wouldn't get new elite formations. They would be like the British aristocracy, a caste whose performativity, rituals and relation to decaying institutions of feudal entitlement is increasingly at odds with the tech-based entrepreneurs, the innovators of Silicon Valley and elsewhere, who are certainly not a reproduction of the elites of any *ancien regime*. They are actually transforming the ways in which the elites produce and reproduce themselves. We have to take that into account as Dominic Cummings, the current Svengali of British politics, argues. Also, the nature of elite reproduction varies quite significantly nationally. The work of my colleagues, Charles Harvey and Mairi Maclean (Harvey, Maclean and Chia, 2010) and their various collaborators uses Bourdieu to compare elite origins and destinations in countries such as France and the United Kingdom. And they find quite significant differences between them.

Richard Whitley, Alan Thomas and Jane Marceau (1981) looked at INSEAD and LBS, the two elite business schools in Europe. The book was called *Masters of Business: the making of a new elite*. These institutions recruit students from many different European countries. Looking at the data they came to the conclusion that the elite trajectories varied quite remarkably from the different countries. In Germany, if I recall correctly, it was largely engineering, in Britain it was Oxbridge classics, Italy, I believe was law, and so on. These things are institutionally specific and are permeable, they are open, they do transform, they do change. Business Schools have been vital capillaries in the translation of declining capital into new avenues for investment.

MB: What do you think in terms of addressing inner qualities, injustices, unfairness etc. Do you think that it's simply something that cannot be done on a grand scale? Is it a matter of individual micro resistance? Or is it enough to denounce the existence of inequalities? In other words, is it possible to turn part of your scholarship from descriptive into prescriptive?

SC: Yes, I think it is. My sympathies have always been with Scandinavian social democracies because it does seem to me that these are prescriptions for producing a better life and better, more civil societies. Why is this the case? Well, there is far less probability of money buying the kind of educational privileges, that it does in some other countries. Australia has amongst the highest number of students in fee-paying secondary education in the OECD, some of which is not elite schooling while some is. If we could only democratise the institutions! The prescription would be, for instance, that everyone should be educated in the state system, that there should not be any fee-paying schools, there should not be a second tier of religiously stratified schools. The chances of actually implementing those changes, given the existing circuits of power, is absolutely zilch. But what you can do is look comparatively. You can look at comparative data, you can look at destinations and origins and you will find that they are quite different in some of those Scandinavian countries. Of course, if policy was designed 'rationally' then isomorphism premised on 'best practice' models would be obvious but of course that is not how policy happens. Power and interests shape its modes of rationality in discursive and other struggles.

Some of the most interesting work done in organisation theory came out of the Tavistock socio-technic school, on industrial democracy, such as Emery and Thorsud (2013) and colleagues. In Norway there are people still very committed to it and it has shaped institutions in lots of different ways. Colleagues from Norway and Sweden (see, for example, Bygdås, Clegg and Haigen, 2019) remain strongly oriented towards action research. For them research should try to implement changes at the system level to make it function in better, not necessarily more efficient, ways.

MB: From a material, physical point of view, efficiency is essential: it is about avoiding waste energy while performing a task. It could be said that being efficient is necessary if we want to be environmentally sustainable. However, the notion of efficiency has been enslaved to neoliberal ends, becoming the underlabourer of profit. From this perspective efficiency is exclusively about reducing costs while maximizing productivity, so that the return on investment can be higher. Hence the question should be: efficient towards which goals?

Another important point you are making concerns the notion of democracy, which should be understood as a process (democratising?) rather than a static set of institution. This is because democracy doesn't merely mean, giving power to the people, or having the populace decide on every matter, which causes paradoxical effects (that unfortunately we are experiencing around the world), such as the election of authoritarian leaders who proceed to erode civil and social freedoms.

SC: It entails democratising the institutions and organisations. I recently had a conversation after interviewing a senior project manager in Multiplex, a major Australian construction company who had worked for Skanska, a Swedish firm, prior to coming to Australia. I said, "you must have found a lot of difference between working in the Scandinavian firm with many practices of work democratisation, much more collaboration and consultation and then coming to work in Multiplex." He told us the whole story about how working in Scandinavia for him had been, empowering because there was more genuine collaboration, there was more engagement, whereas coming to work in a fairly hierarchical organisation in Australia, he was shocked by the lack of engagement and the lack of collaboration. Now these things are not random differences, those practices

inscribed in Swedish and Norwegian organisations have deep roots. There is a strand of Norwegian sociology which argues that in a harsh and adverse climate with little in the way of natural resources, based largely on farming and fishing, people had to collaborate in order to be able to survive. A bit like the Dutch Polder view.

MB: I guess you are not seeing the correlation between collaboration and democracy in a deterministic way. In East Asia societies such as Japan or China's participation in collective efforts is strongly embedded in history and culture (also linked to the Confucian notion of loyalty), and probably environmental conditions favoured this (rice cultivation requires extensive community collaboration to build and maintain irrigation etc.). Yet their 'collectivism' has always been inspired by hierarchical principles.

SC: Of course, social reality can mutate in all sorts of ways. One of the factors that helped Scandinavian social democracy develop in the way that it did, was the impact of prescriptive scholarship because there were a number of key personnel in the post war era who were committed to organisational and industrial democracy and their ideas gained traction in Sweden, in Norway, in part because the conditions were fertile, the intellectual and institutional soil was already prepared. Elsewhere, Confucian ethics led to other outcomes (Redding, 1990) or became shaped through authoritarian state framing.

Interestingly, as our field of knowledge, Management and Organisation Studies, has become more and more professionalised and institutionalised it has become more and more North American. And ideas of social democracy never had purchase of major consequence in North American intellectual organization and management theory circles. So consequently, scholars being produced and reproduced today don't have any commitment to those ideals of industrial and organisational democracy, which came through from some early European founders. It's not that students today don't like these ideas, they don't know them, they're not aware of them, they don't exist on their intellectual compass. Descriptively we know for instance, when the Marshall Plan was implemented in Europe in the post war era, the American scholars and businessmen who came to

Germany were utterly opposed to the supervisory board idea, the idea there'd be a supervisory board on which the representatives of the employees were members. Because for them it was socialism.

MB: A Bogeyman…

SC: A Bogeyman. The stigmata of not America. So yes, it would seem to be a bogeyman. We could trace the processes whereby this occurred. Europeans of my generation, when we were undergraduates, learnt about industrial democracy and organisational democratisation as part of the curriculum. We do not find discussion of it in the vast majority of areas in which the communities of practice to which we subscribe, publish and reproduce their ideas. Ideas fade away, sometimes helped by political solvent dissolving what previous generations of students maturing into scholars can remember and forget. How many MBA students in most places learn about democratic ways of managing and designing organizations? On a related tack, how many such scholars are aware of how mundane organizations can harbour within the seeds of total institutions and their affinities (Clegg, 2006)?

MB: This suggests me an idea. Implicit to what you are describing is the role played by some almost invisible actants, such as KPIs, setting measurably objectives. You have highlighted the importance of an engaged scholarship for organizational sociologists, one with a performative intent. The goal of this pursuit should not just be contributing to increases in efficiency or productivity but rather to foster the development of a better society. Yet, scholars are human beings, with human foibles. As such, we are often duped in a sort of 'gamification' of our job as we compete with each other to 'make out' and surpass their expected production quotas, very similarly to the manufacturing workers described by Burawoy (1979). We are all driven by publications, citations, impact etcetera, and to publish in 'top journals' it is essential – particularly in our discipline – to demonstrate that your work both contributes to theory and that it can have some practical impact, in terms of offering prescriptive advice to practitioners. Such prescriptions are typically aimed at increasing productivity. Wouldn't it be possible for engaged scholars leverage on their roles as

editors, reviewers, contributors to persuade academic journals publishing boards to include, among the requirements for publications, to demonstrate a degree of social engagement, having to reflect on what are the potential impacts of our ideas on the betterment of society?

SC: Well that brings us full circle because the book that I most recently published with my colleagues, Miguel Pina e Cunha, Arménio Rego and Ace Simpson, is on *Positive Organizational Behaviour*: *A Reflective Approach* (Cunha, Rego, Simpson and Clegg, 2020). What we've tried to do in that book is to engage with the positive organisations scholarship movement which has developed in organisation studies in the last 15 years or so. Having made a series of investigations of evil organizations (Cunha, Clegg & Rego, 2014; Cunha, Clegg & Rego, 2012; Cunha, Clegg, Rego & Lancione, 2012; Cunha, Rego & Clegg, 2011; Cunha, Clegg & Rego, 2010), following on from what I wrote about the 'heart of darkness' (Clegg et al 2006), we decided, dialectically, to do the obverse and theorize positivity rather than negativity. To try and engage with it critically, to produce research that engages with and shows ways in which we might make organisations better places in which to be. I mean we cannot live without them, but we can live with different forms of them. And some forms of them have the potential to be better for human fulfilment, for human life than others. And that's what the book strives to do. In the chapter on power we discuss power 'over', 'with' and 'to' as well as 'within'.

MB: So, are we looking forward to a new edition of *Frameworks of Power*?

SC: Possibly. In some respects, *Power and Organizations*, already did some of that work. For instance, the material on Goffman, total institutions and the 'heart of darkness', inspired all the writing on evil organizations. I wrote that book, which the series editor had been pestering me to do for some years, eventually doing it with two colleagues in order to be sure not to repeat myself too much – as it transpired, I came up with a lot of new ideas – genealogical again, but another genealogy this time; more explicitly Foucauldian.

In my study, you'll see the *Journal of Political Power* arranged in two piles. Now the pile I have read is greater than the pile I haven't read. Now the virus has closed down the university, then I hope that I will have an opportunity to go back into the study, go back into the journal, work out what I want to incorporate from the debates that have taken place there, although at present online work seems to take more time than face-to-face. Perhaps I will also include some of the empirical work that I've done with various scholars using the circuits framework to explore performance regimes in hospitals, in accounting and so on. So, there might be a silver lining to being 'locked down'.

Addendum: there was no silver lining given the demands of online teaching in the midst of substantially significant budget cuts caused by the loss of income derived from full-fee foreign students.

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